

World Earth Day (April 22, 2019)



Mother Earth: a term from the Veda

...माता भूमिः पुत्रो अहं पृथिव्याः ।

...*maata bhoomih putro aham prithivyah* (AtharvaVeda 12.01.12)

Our planet, Earth is beneficial and soothing as the mother is to her children.

We are duty-bound to treat her right and benefit from her grace and splendour.

“PROTECT OUR SPECIES”, theme of the 2019 Earth Day

It is important to reflect on this day that we resolve that our wealth will be acquired in a net positive way to our Mother Earth ...in an ecologically and socially sustainable way. Any other way is simply irresponsible! Hence, the duty of all humans to protect all species of our ecosystem.

Refusal to face painful facts or unpleasant truths

The fear that we will be asked to tidy up the mess we have been and are creating pushes us to simply refuse to accept responsibility for irresponsible behaviour.

Yet, prevention is not only better but also cheaper than cure! The starting point is: we all need to first drop the hoarding attitude which has led to the abusive use of resources, destruction of the environment, etc. ...as if we have a second planet earth as reserve!

The Veda calls on humanity to respect the ecosystem

The Veda, the universal knowledge Revealed at the creation of the human race shows the way. Its application is more relevant today than ever, as highlighted by the hymns in honour of the Mother Earth. "*The Prithvi Sukta*" (AtharvaVeda 12. 1. 1-63) refers to our planet as Mother Earth and call upon humanity to respect the ecosystem - air, water, trees, rivers, etc. and abide by the laws of nature.

The first hymn of the Prithivee (Bhoomi) Sukta (पृथिवी / भूमि सूक्त) is as follows:

सत्यं बृहदृतमुग्रं दीक्षा तपो ब्रह्म यज्ञः पृथिवीं धारयन्ति ।

सा नो भूतस्य भव्यस्य पत्न्युरुं लोकं पृथिवी नः कृणोतु ॥१॥

Satyam Brihad-Ritam-Ugram Deekshaa Tapo Brahma Yajnyah Prithiveem Dhaarayanti, Saa No Bhootasya Bhavyasya Patnyurum Lokam Prithivee Nah Krinotu.

Meaning:

Those who are truthful in thoughts, speech and deeds, who possess true knowledge of the Divine Creation (Earth & the universe), who always exercise self-control, who are devoted to God and abide by the laws of the Creation (Nature), follow the guidance of learned persons always enjoy peace, progress and prosperity on this planet, Earth. This is an eternal truth, valid in the past, present and future.

Aparigraha (Sanskrit: अपरिग्रह)

Expounding the knowledge of the Veda, Sage Patanjali has in the Yoga Darshan (Yoga philosophy) handed over a holistic approach to healthy living: Yama (यम, social discipline) and Niyama (नियम, personal discipline). One of the don'ts is *Aparigraha*, the virtue of non-possessiveness, non-grasping or non-greediness.

The word *parigraha* (परिग्रह) means the attitudes of craving, possessiveness, and hoarding of material possessions and includes the results as well as the intent, namely - the things acquired as a result of those attitudes. The contrary, *aparigraha* refers the desire for possessions of what is only necessary or important, as per the stage and context of one's life. It is willpower at work to stay away from the greed and avarice, overruling desires to indulge in one's own material gain or happiness comes by hurting, killing or destroying other human beings, life forms or nature. *Aparigraha* includes the psychological state of "letting go and the releasing of control, transgressions, fears" and being content, anxieties offloaded.

Adopted in life, the concept of aparigraha serves as a constant reminder that “we’ve only got one (Mother Earth)...we need to treat her right”.

Respect for Mother Earth

Earth Day is time to revisit our life experiences as infants! ‘As infants, our instincts told us we could not survive without our mother and she was our entire world.’ Common sense (a rare commodity) requires us to be ever aware that Mother Earth is vital for our survival. Ancient civilizations and cultures had the awesome feel to respectfully connect to nature in all aspects of life.

We only have to take some moments daily to watch the Creation, and enjoin our relatives and friends to connect to nature and appreciate the wonders of the Creation unfolding before us:

- ❖ Observe ...the fresh air of the forests ...germinating seeds ...growing plants ...colourful flowers ...crops in fields ...fruit-laden plants and trees ...the scenery at sunrise and sunset, ...the shades of light on the sides of hills and mountain tops ...nature at changing seasons ...stars and moon in the sky ...the innocence of children ...hardworking ants;
- ❖ Listen to ...the chirping of birds ...the sound of water flowing in streams and rivers ...sound of waves on lakes and oceans;
- ❖ Feel the warm/cool soothing breeze.

That's the walk-the-talk policy. When we enjoy that magic and let our children enjoy that magic, we are surely handing over the methodology to value the grace and splendour of Mother Earth. If we fail, we will break the transmission line and generations to come will "care even less" and the "take-for-granted attitude" will amplify the threat to not only other species but also to human life.

We, humans, cohabit millions of species, some known and lots unknown. Every single feature in the Creation and each form of life on Earth play an exclusive role in the complex ecosystem. Regrettably, human activity (deforestation, trafficking and poaching, unsustainable agriculture & animal husbandry, soil, water & air pollution, pesticides, etc.) is the only one that irreversibly upsets the ecosystem, the balance of nature, amongst others - climate change, habitat loss and extinction of living species. The unfortunate Dodo has engendered a renowned saying: "***as dead as the Dodo***".

Why care for "Mother Earth"?

As a cradle, she sustains life by providing the life fundamentals

- ▲ air, water, food, shelter, etc.
- ▲ medicinal herbs and other crops for healthy living.

She is consistent

- ▲ day and night prompt all to a mindful and balanced life
- ▲ the seasons are for the welfare of all living beings
- ▲ the waters, the land, vegetation form a self-sustainable ecosystem.

She (nature) is a marvellous source of knowledge, material and spiritual treasures

- ▲ discoveries before, in the era of Modern science and beyond only explain the manifestations in nature;
- ▲ inventions and creations by humans have been possible through applications of materials existing on Earth;
- ▲ all living beings are made of the same five elements found in our planet: space, air, fire (energy), water, and earth.

Treat Mother Earth Right

Like drops add up to form the ocean, there is need for each of us to be involved. As concerned citizens, consumers, voters, educators, faith leaders, scientists, decision-makers, every individual effort counts.

The goals of the Earth Day Network are inspirational:

- * Educate and raise awareness about the accelerating rate of extinction of millions of species and the causes and consequences of this phenomenon.
- * Achieve major policy victories that protect broad groups of species as well as individual species and their habitats.
- * Build and activate a global movement that embraces nature and its values.
- * Encourage individual actions such as adopting plant based diet and stopping pesticide and herbicide use.

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